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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

THE MEMBERSHIP RECORD

At various times the Executive Committee has discussed the question of reports of chapter elections that have been made by the various chapters and printed in the *QUARTERLY*. It will be recalled that one of the prominent reasons for the establishment of a journal was that it might serve as a permanent record of the additions to the membership in the society and of the basis on which such additions were made. In the salutory printed in the first number and written by that enthusiast and energetic leader, Professor S. W. Williston, he stated among other things, that the *QUARTERLY* "will record the names of all those who are honored by election to membership and something also of the work of each." At about the same date the Executive Committee prepared an outline of the form in which such records should be presented for publication. This record has been emphasized in various communications sent the chapters by order of the Executive Committee, and the reasons for it have been discussed many times in the *QUARTERLY* by the officers and other members of the organization. It seems appropriate to report for consideration of the Executive Committee first, on the extent to which this oft-repeated, urgent request of the Committee has been answered by the action of various chapters, and second, upon the extent to which time has strengthened or tended to weaken the reasons that formed the basis for the request made six years ago.

A review of the pages of the *QUARTERLY* shows that up to date and including the present number, chapter reports have been printed as shown in the following table (p. 104).

It is interesting to note that in the period indicated there should have been 200 annual reports from the chapters in the Sigma Xi Society, provided each chapter elected someone to membership each year. In this computation the alumni chapter of the District of Columbia is omitted, since in accordance with the terms of the constitution it does not possess the power of electing new members. Furthermore, the record of the Texas chapter is dated from 1915, the year in which it was installed. Out of this total number of possible reports there have actually been printed only 75, or only 38 per cent. of the total. I should not neglect to mention that certain

TABLE I

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Yearly Reports Printed</i>							<i>Total No. of Rep'ris</i>
Illinois.....	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	7
Cornell.....	.....	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	6
University of Washington.....	.....	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	6
Pennsylvania.....	.....	.....	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	5
Missouri.....	.....	1913	.....	1915	1916	1917	1918	5
Chicago.....	.....	1913	1914	1915	.....	1917	1918	5
Northwestern.....	.....	1913	.....	1915	1916	1917	1918	5
Purdue.....	1912	.....	1914	.....	1916	1917	.....	4
Union.....	.....	.....	1914	.....	1916	1917	.....	3
Nebraska.....	.....	.....	1914	.....	1916	.....	1918	3
Ohio.....	1912	1913	.....	.....	1916	.....	.....	3
Michigan.....	.....	1913	1914	1915	.....	.....	.....	3
Syracuse.....	.....	.....	.....	1915	.....	1917	1918	3
Worcester.....	.....	1913	.....	.....	1916	1917	.....	3
Yale.....	.....	1913	.....	.....	1916	.....	.....	2
Colorado.....	.....	1913	.....	.....	1916	.....	.....	2
Texas.....	*	*	*	1915	1916	.....	.....	2
Rensselaer.....	.....	.....	1914	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Kansas.....	1912	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Minnesota.....	.....	1913	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Iowa.....	.....	1913	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Stanford.....	1912	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Case.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1916	.....	.....	1
Indiana.....	1912	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1
Washington University.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1917	.....	1
Brown.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	0
California.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	0
Columbia.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	0
Wisconsin.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	0
								75

* Texas chapter not installed until 1915.

reports have been sent me by a few of the chapters which, under the instructions of the Executive Committee, I was compelled to return, usually because they gave merely a list of names of persons elected to various grades of membership, without any evidence of the work done or the basis on which the election was made. Where such reports have been returned, they have always been accompanied by an explanation in accordance with the instructions of the Committee, indicating the importance for the Society and for the Chapter of stating somewhat definitely the basis for the election of individual members; with this went the request that the record should be perfected by the addition of the evidence desired and returned, in order that it might be printed. I regret to state that in most cases the

secretaries have not complied with the request of the Executive Committee, and the lists have not been returned in corrected form for publication.

It is of some interest to note that in general the largest and most active chapters have been those which have made reports most frequently. It is, of course, natural that chapters with a large member-

TABLE II
ELECTIONS TO MEMBERSHIP IN YEAR ENDING JUNE OF DATE GIVEN

	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Totals
Cornell.....	....	66	62	55	67	65	43	358
Rensselaer.....	....	....	16	....	....	....	....	16
Union.....	....	....	10	....	11	5	....	26
Kansas.....	16	....	....	....	....	....	....	16
Yale.....	....	40	....	....	62	....	....	102
Minnesota.....	....	13	....	....	....	....	....	13
Nebraska.....	....	....	22	....	21	....	11	54
Ohio State.....	26	27	....	....	27	....	....	80
Pennsylvania.....	....	....	33	32	31	38	34	168
Brown.....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Iowa.....	....	25	....	....	....	....	....	25
Stanford.....	23	....	....	....	....	....	....	23
California.....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Columbia.....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
Chicago.....	12	27	43	42	....	91	53	268
Michigan.....	....	68	29	43	....	....	....	140
Illinois.....	5	51	59	39	42	53	49	298
Case.....	....	....	....	....	18	....	....	18
Indiana.....	9	....	....	....	....	....	....	9
Missouri.....	....	17	....	14	16	11	7	65
Colorado.....	....	12	....	....	17	....	....	29
Northwestern.....	....	9	....	10	19	15	11	64
Syracuse.....	....	....	....	11	....	9	11	31
Wisconsin.....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	....
University of Washington.....	....	11	20	23	22	26	13	115
Worcester.....	....	16	....	....	17	....	19	52
Purdue.....	13	....	14	....	17	21	....	65
Washington University.....	....	....	....	....	....	19	....	19
Texas.....	....	....	....	11	8	....	....	19
Totals.....	104	382	308	280	395	353	251	2073

The figures cited represent the number of names in the lists of members elected as given in reports of Chapter Secretaries printed in the *QUARTERLY*.

ship should be better organized and better equipped to carry out the wishes of the Committee. It is also easy to see that in smaller institutions the personal acquaintance of the members with the individual students gives a more perfect means for forming a judgment in the particular case of any proposal for membership, so that probably

less precise data are collected for use in elections and hence the labor of preparing a list would be relatively greater. In actual procedure the work involved is much less, since the chapter has only a few persons to deal with. The reports presented represent a total of about 2,070 names (Table II). During the period indicated, the Society has been increased, according to the best statistical information that has been obtained, by the addition of about 4,500 new members, so that the names on record represent approximately 46 per cent. of the additions to membership between 1912 and 1919.

It is also interesting to note the chronological distribution of these reports. The largest number of reports—namely, 15—was made in the year 1916, and the smallest number of reports—namely, 6—was made in the year 1912. In other years the situation is as follows:

1913	13 reports
1917	12 reports
1914	10 reports
1915	10 reports
1918	9 reports

From these figures it appears that the practice of making such reports increased from one-fifth the total number of chapters in 1912 to more than one-half in 1916, fell off slightly in 1917, and was reduced considerably in 1918.

It is not strange that great confusion existed in the organization during the year 1918 and that only within recent months have chapters begun to attain again the regular procedure that marked their activity before the war. But going back to times that were not subject to such difficulties it seems unfortunately true that the records of the Society are not in as good condition as one might wish. At the time when the *Quarter Century Record and History* was issued, every effort was made to bring the membership records up to date and the list as printed in that volume covers all elections up to and including December 31, 1911. Since that time there have been discovered a few errors in the printed record, and the appropriate corrections have been printed in the *QUARTERLY*. It is possible that other undiscovered defects still remain to be corrected, but the list of the membership in the earlier years may be regarded as substantially correct. No one who has looked into the subject can question the importance of this fact, for the records of one chapter were

totally destroyed by fire and the records of various others have been misplaced or lost in part, so that few of them are in position to give from their own records an absolute list of the membership of the single chapter. Even in the case of one of the oldest, most perfectly organized, and most careful chapters, which devotes especial attention to the accurate making and preservation of its records, there has been given recently evidence of the election to membership in it of a faculty member whose name could not be found on their rolls.

The Executive Committee has asked how far the experience of the Secretary's office indicates that the reasons for requesting chapters to make complete and accurate reports of elections in order that these might become a matter of permanent record, have been justified by the experience since the publication of the *QUARTERLY* was begun in 1913. In my own opinion the case is very clear. In so far as conditions have changed, those changes have merely emphasized the reasons advanced to demonstrate the necessity of such a record, and I think also that the evidence has accumulated with unexpected rapidity. The average member of the Society does not fully comprehend its growth and so it is especially difficult to convince those who have not had opportunity to look into the situation in detail that there is any reason for the organization of machinery to accumulate and preserve such records. It is natural that in the office of the Secretary, I am brought into contact with more of the difficulties which arise from lack of such records, and become cognizant thereby of situations that do not come to the general attention of members of the organization. At the same time, however thoroughly I might be convinced myself, I should not feel like urging my own views on the subject if it were not that the chapters themselves are furnishing evidence so definite and convincing that it cannot be set aside, but ought to be brought to the attention of every member.

The parent chapter at Cornell University has now nearly 1,500 members. This is more than ten per cent. of the total membership in the Society. It is safe to say that no chapter has built up a more careful system of keeping records, and so far as I know there is no other part of our organization that has at all equalled the system installed at Cornell to insure accuracy and permanency of the chapter records. Year by year the methods of this chapter are being worked over to insure greater perfection; yet there is no chapter on the roll of the Sigma Xi which is so thoroughly alive to the necessity of

securing complete national records or has urged so constantly the perfection of a general roster of the Society, as well as no chapter which has reported more frequently or equally fully in response to the request of the Executive Committee. It should be said also that this response has been made regularly in compliance with the first request sent out from the Secretary's office. Illinois is credited in the statistical table with one more annual report than any other chapter owing to the personal appeal of the Secretary, which has yielded even more response than the formal notices called for.

The Pennsylvania chapter, which stands in age and membership very close to Cornell, has not only expressed its approval of the plan of the Executive Committee to secure and preserve the fullest possible records, but has coöperated promptly and effectively in furnishing reports of the chapter. The perfect record of the Chicago chapter may unquestionably be traced to the interest and active coöperation of our national President. Its published reports include even the year 1918 of great confusion owing to the participation of so many in war activities. I should not neglect to mention the University of Washington, at which the record has been perfected and brought up to date by a most efficient secretary who recently became greatly interested in the matter and appreciated the importance of the situation sufficiently to devote considerable time and energy to working up and preparing for publication the records of missing years. The University of Missouri and Northwestern University also have nearly a complete record of elections, including 1918.

The Secretary has previously reported the statement, apparently made on good authority, that emblems of the Society have been seen in pawnbrokers' windows and offered for sale second-hand as charms under other circumstances. It has also been reported by some members that persons have been known to wear the emblem of the Society whose names did not appear in the printed records and who were apparently unknown to the chapters supposedly responsible for their election. It is possible that all of these statements are based upon imperfect evidence. It has not been feasible to investigate them sufficiently to pass final judgment.

The reverse is also equally important. Men of honorable standing in their communities claiming membership in Sigma Xi have been embarrassed to have it said that their names did not appear on

the records of the organization. In some cases inquiry of the chapter concerned disclosed the fact that the name was not in the roster of that chapter, although abundant evidence was found in certain instances at least to demonstrate that the fault lay with the records of the chapter, and that the individual was rightly entitled to membership in the Society. When one begins to consider how rapidly membership in this organization is increasing and how much more frequent such errors are likely to become, the reasons for urging the preparation and maintenance of a complete printed membership record appear very strong.

I would not pass over without mention a criticism of the Society which has been voiced both in friendly and in critical fashion by those not connected with it but sufficiently interested in its ideals to watch its progress and to be concerned with the results achieved. It is not alone critics of the society who have maintained that the organization has not applied any real measure to determine those capable of doing research work, and that the selection of members has been influenced often by personal factors to the derogation of research standards. Indeed, some of our own most prominent, energetic and enthusiastic members have also frequently stated in discussion that it was questionable whether the Society was fully realizing its standards and that evidence had come to their attention suggesting that Sigma Xi might be distributing its honors too broadly, or in the individual case too loosely.

All persons in constant contact with an individual institution are apt to be blind to the actual situation and may be influenced by personal worth of a friend to favor an election not actually substantiated by the scientific standing of the individual in question. Such a tendency is so apparent when the record of the work done by the candidate is published in connection with the election that the very fact of publication tends to correct the dangerous tendency. On the other hand, the definite records of work done demonstrate in a striking way the breadth and vigor of research activities in the institutions and departments concerned. The splendid lists of research topics credited to those elected to membership in the Cornell, Pennsylvania, Chicago, and other chapters, as published in the *QUARTERLY*, is the amplest justification of the care with which these chapters are guarding the interests of research and are justifying their position as leaders in our Society for the promotion of research.

Isolated reports from some other chapters show this same situation so well that one cannot help regretting the omission of records in so many years where the presence of the facts would unquestionably serve to strengthen and establish the impression gained from the examination of an occasional list of elections coupled with a record of the work done by those selected for membership.

ELECTIONS TO MEMBERSHIP

The chapters do not yet seem to have clearly thought out the proper basis for election to the Society. In spite of the repeated request of the Executive Committee that list of elections should be accompanied by a statement under each name of the basis of election, the Secretary is constantly in receipt of lists without any indication of work done, and an inquiry as to the basis for election, which has always been sent in accordance with the request of the Executive Committee, usually elicits an indefinite reply. One Secretary wrote that the undergraduates were elected purely on the promise of research ability, but without specific evidence of any kind to establish the same. The Executive Committee would clarify the atmosphere considerably if it could get before the chapters a more perfect conception of the development that has taken place in most chapters within recent years. While it has not yet been possible to print exact statistics with regard to the utilization of the new type known as associate membership, it may be stated that the plan has met with general favor and is being introduced among the stronger chapters. The University of Washington is the latest to announce that such a plan will probably be put into operation with the beginning of the year 1920.

NEED OF PERMANENT RECORDS

The need of records was strikingly demonstrated this year by the discovery of a Sigma Xi emblem for sale in a pawnshop. It appeared at first that the name was not on the records of the chapter in which the election was supposed to have taken place, but more thorough investigation showed that the record of the election had been printed in the *QUARTERLY*. Fortunately the key was inscribed with the name of the one elected to the Society and with the chapter involved so that the emblem was restored to its proper owner. In this connection attention has been called to the fact that the provision

of the constitution with reference to the date to be used on the emblem sometimes leads to a misunderstanding. As specified in the constitution, this date shall be "the numeral of the class in which he graduated, and the name of such college where graduation took place." Now the election of a graduate student from a small college or of a faculty member who comes into contact with the Society perhaps a considerable number of years after he graduated, results in placing misleading data on the emblem in case the instructions of the constitution are followed out literally. The significant features would seem to be the name of the college in which was located the chapter making the election and the date of the year in which the election was made. A minor change in phraseology would render such confusion impossible.

EXPENSES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Constitution regularly provides that expenses of the Executive Committee should be paid to the meeting held in the spring, and it is fair to inquire whether the same condition should not be provided when a meeting of the Executive Committee is held just before the Convention. Railroad travel at present is expensive, and the college men who are represented on the Committee are certainly not in a position themselves to contribute with justice to other obligations the amount required. Furthermore, the society profits greatly by the services rendered it by the men of wide experience and judgment who constitute its Executive Committee, and one may well ask whether it wishes under these circumstances to permit them to assume any financial burden in connection with the work of the society. On the other hand, if it is not feasible to get a good majority of the Executive Committee together for careful consideration of the problems that confront the Society, we shall only emphasize the present situation, in which the organization is in danger of developing too rapidly as a series of independent and unrelated units rather than as a coordinated entity.

PROPOSED SECTIONS IN CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

One of the questions which needs most careful attention on the part of the Executive Committee and the Society deals with the organization of chapters in those institutions where the different colleges or schools are not on the same campus. Thus, Cornell, Kansas, Nebraska, California, Chicago, Illinois, and perhaps other institu-

tions have certain faculties located on ground separated from the main campus by five or ten, or even up to 200 miles. The question of the relation of such sections of the University to the institutions in so far as Sigma Xi obligations and privileges are concerned is one that has been discussed intermittently for some time. In May, 1918, the Executive Committee took up the problem on the basis of an inquiry from one of the chapters, and the record of its action is found in the minutes of that meeting. (See *QUARTERLY*, 6:37, June, 1918):

The question was submitted for the consideration of the Executive Committee as to whether in institutions having departments in different geographical locations, the members of the Society in one locality can be an integral part of the active organization on the main campus. It was voted that wherever such an outlying college, school, or station is in reality an integral part of the institution and under the full control of the governing body thereof, any person connected with it, even though not on the central campus of the institution may retain or acquire active membership in the chapter with all the rights and privileges connected therewith.

It appears that this action was not sufficiently definite to meet the needs, in some cases at least, and one chapter having a medical school located at a distance from the main campus presents the following inquiry:

Is there any reason why if the ——— Chapter wishes to do so, it may not authorize its ——— members to organize there a local section of the ——— Chapter? I do not know of any reason why this may not be done if the Chapter wants to do it; but you may know of some provision or policy of the Society that makes such an organization impracticable or undesirable.

Such a section as I have in mind would effect its own organization, arrange its own program, choose its own officers, fix its own dues—so long as these provided for payment of the dues fixed by the Chapter, and conduct itself as it pleased so long as its acts were consistent with the provisions of the Chapter and of the Society at large. It could not elect members, that being a function of the Chapter; but if it wished to put a sectional approval on nominations made in due form, I do not see any reason why it could not aid the Board of Electors by doing this.

The questions involved are somewhat complex. The one to which I wish to refer first of all is not even suggested in the inquiry, but is necessarily involved in its consideration. It is the relation of the Sigma Xi Society to the medical school. Some years ago the problem came up for general discussion, and doubt was expressed as to the wisdom of Sigma Xi entering into the professional schools because of the existence there of fraternities having a similar aim

and nearly, if not thoroughly, identical conditions for the selection of members. The medical school society, Alpha Omega Alpha, is the best known and has secured a strong footing in many medical schools, including most of those institutions where Sigma Xi is already established. One of the early difficulties in the development of our own organization was the idea that grew up in the minds of some persons that Sigma Xi competed with Phi Beta Kappa. Twenty years ago the discussions in our conventions and the addresses of Sigma Xi leaders were pretty generally devoted to demonstrating that there was no real competition and that the two organizations covered fields that were thoroughly distinct. Phi Beta Kappa laid its emphasis upon general standing, as determined by average grade in undergraduate courses. Sigma Xi desired to promote scholarship through picking the unusual man and the one who has that promise of power in research which enables him to go beyond the set limits of knowledge and add to that which is at the command of man. There is a feeling in some quarters that the extension of Sigma Xi activities into the medical school would be tantamount to entering into competition directly with the organizations already well-established there. I bring this up not at all with the desire to determine the policy of the Society but that the Executive Committee may be familiar with the conditions which have existed in the past and the general reasons for action which has been taken in somewhat similar cases. It may be that the Society should investigate more precisely the relations between the various organizations as a preliminary move before deciding upon the question of internal organization in Sigma Xi which is raised by the inquiry laid before us.

The general question raised by the chapter cited is fundamentally the extent to which a chapter may go in elaborating its organization and broadening its influence. It is evident that if legal status is given any portion of a chapter, the situation may soon develop to the extent that such a portion considers itself endowed with somewhat independent privileges. The proverbial tendencies of such subordinate bodies to seek constantly the enlargement of their powers and the extension of their privileges is too well known to need more than passing mention to bring it to your attention. One may well inquire, if such a subordinate group may elect officers and fix dues within the limits of the by-laws of the chapter and the constitution of the general Society, then why may it not elect members, subject

to conformity to the chapter regulations? If so, is it not true that the chapter must approve all recommendations made and thus be a purely formal agency, while the real power of election lies with the section that nominates, or else misunderstandings and contentions will be easy, since the main chapter knows nothing in reality of the situation and the subordinate group has that first-hand information which is essential to proper action? If this be so, will not the election of members become almost immediately a practical function of the section, and under these conditions will there not be created actually a separate body, an *imperium in imperio*?

Finally, is it not right to suggest that the ultimate decision of this question must rest upon the relation of the matter to the encouragement of research, which is the fundamental function, and I firmly believe the only test of wise policy, which the Society of the Sigma Xi has? I am a little inclined to feel that the number of societies in the medical school and the complex and irregular duties that fall to the lot of the medical student are not likely to leave much opportunity for encouraging research through a general scientific society. In the better schools there are a good many scientific clubs which are organized around specific lines of activity and serve to stimulate the interest of the student in that particular line. The medical student is a rather highly specialized type, and at a certain period of his career is deeply engrossed with pathology, whereas at another he may be equally profoundly interested in the clinical laboratory group or in the surgical seminar. The special and general societies founded for and by the practitioners also claim and receive a considerable share of his time. I think these factors should receive the very careful attention of the Executive Committee and of the Society before a final decision is reached.

REPORT ON UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Members of the Executive Committee will recall that there have been two meetings of that Committee since the last General Convention of the Society was held in Pittsburgh. With reference to the plan for furnishing associate membership pins to chapters, which was approved in general by the Pittsburgh convention and referred to the Executive Committee for adjustment of detail, let me report that the method decided upon seems to be working adequately, and considering the present confusion in manufacturing circles, emblems

have been furnished with exceedingly little delay. There has been general approval of the character of the emblem and the reasonableness of its price.

Most of the chapters have adopted the recommendation of the Executive Committee which was passed in May, 1918, to the effect that the office of Corresponding Secretary be abolished and all secretarial work of the chapter be conducted through the same individual. At the present moment, all but six chapters have done away with the office of Corresponding Secretary or have united it in the same person as the Recording Secretary.

HENRY B. WARD, *Secretary*